

Shloka and Bhaktigeet: A Bhaktiyog

The essence of Hindu philosophy is to understand self. The basic guideline for understanding self is well described in Bhagvadgeeta. It emphasizes to walk on three paths: Dnyan (understand self), Karma (carry assigned task) and Bhakti (love thyself) yog. The Shloka (verses chanted in the praise of God) is one of the forms of Bhaktiyog. They are in the form of a sublimation of self to the God. However, it is extremely difficult to offer self to something (the God) that does not exist in physical form though it exists everywhere. It is therefore, Indian philosophy considers easiest way of getting closer to the God is worship the God seen in the form of a deity (Moortipuja). It also offers a wide choice of a particular deity to an individual to which he/she would love. The true love of the worship would finally reach to the God.

An all time, for all ages and all poetrical forms lead to Bhaktiyog

Worshipping the concept of God therefore has become an easy - by praising thyself in the form one visualizes. The Shloka that praise the God can be chanted by any one - young or old. It is rather an entry level Bhakti marg to the understanding of the self and therefore youngest child who has just learnt art of speaking can also chant shloka. There is no specific time during which these shloka could be chanted. Early morning till one goes to the bed - every moment is a right time! One can chant these during a free time or while on drive or while doing any other physical activities or if one has a sleepless night! Of course, there are certain shloka that are specifically suggested to be offered at specific time.

While the small verses (usually 4 lines) are called Shloka, the larger ones are called Stotra. Since the earlier literature of Hindu philosophy is in Sanskrit, a large collection is available in Sanskrit. However, with the advent of regional languages, many Saints have now made them available in their own languages too in various forms: Abhanga, Geet, Bhajan, etc., besides Shloka or Stotra - all in the praise of the God.

Advantages of chanting Shloka, singing bhaktigeet

- There is a joy in reciting the verses. By reciting these and invoking the God mentally, one attains a steady and peaceful mind. Peace of mind is primary and especially important in this materialistic world.
- Regular chanting gives a very good exercise to the brain. It leads to a increase memorization (pathantar) and concentration of mind.
- It helps in reducing inferiority complex by giving a confidence level to the individual that he/she can sing/chant. One does not require to have an authority on the subject. A person without understanding the meaning of the shloka can sit together with an intellectual who understands the inner meaning of what is being chanted and improve.
- Chanting Shloka brings like minded people together and provide floor for a constructive social activities. Start chanting Shloka by all members of the family together. This is one activity that family members of all ages and likes can perform collectively.
- Last but not least - a very powerful tool to understand self.

Purpose of the albums

It is for years now our family members sing/chant together Sanskrit and Marathi devotional songs/shloka everyday. Many of these works in audio form are available on Internet. However, these recordings without background music are likely to help individuals for a clarity in pronunciation, understand lyrics (chaal) and memorize while singing/chanting along with listening. Printed shloka if read while chanting, will certainly accelerate the process of memorization. Self practice is the essence of this exercise.

An inflorescence of 4 albums is grouped on deities: Devi, Ganesh, Shiva_Hanuman, Vishnu_Ram_Krishna and then one each on Gurustavan, Sankeerna (miscellaneous - the shloka that

can not be placed in the album for any specific deity). There is one additional album for wonderful songs of Shri Dadaji's (Shri Pandurangshastri Athawle) Swadhyay_Parivar from their book 'Bhavganga'. It is hoped that this squirrel's contribution will help in bringing joy in your families that we experienced.